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Diminutive Interjections in Polish: The Case of *(O)Jejku* and *(O)Jejciu!*

Abstract

The paper provides a corpus analysis of diminutive interjections based on the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP) and the microblogging site *Twitter* to compare the collocations and emotional meanings of Polish interjections that contain the diminutive *-k-* affix, namely *(o)jejku* (< *(o)jej*). Diminutive interjections are an understudied area of Polish. Wierzbicka (1992) has labelled forms with *-k-* affixes as ‘children’s talk’; however, the collected data reveal that these forms may be used in more contexts than has been generally thought. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of frequent collocations and carried out here demonstrates a variety of meanings and pragmatic functions that they have in Polish. The results suggest that although the diminutive and non-diminutive interjections can appear in similar contexts, the diminutive forms display an additional emotional coloring not found in underived interjections, and also sometimes ‘softening’ of a negative emotion or situation. In addition, the results of the present study contribute to a better understanding of the use of less common forms of diminutives in contemporary Polish.

Keywords

interjections, diminutives, corpus, qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis, Polish

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest analizą wykrzykników z formantem deminutywnym *-k-* we współczesnym języku polskim. Analiza została przeprowadzona na podstawie danych językowych zgromadzonych w Narodowym Korpusie Języka Polskiego (NKJP) oraz w serwisie *Twitter*. Jednym z celów jest porównanie kolokacji i emocjonalnych znaczeń polskich wykrzykników z afiksem *-k-*, głównie *(o)jejku* (< *(o)jej*). Zjawisko deminutywizacji interiekcji nie zostało dotąd gruntownie zbadane. Według Wierzbickiej (1992) deminutywy z *-k-* są charakterystyczne dla języka dzieci. Zebrane wyniki wskazują jednak, że wykrzykniki te mogą być używane w innych kontekstach, niż się powszechnie uważa. Analiza ilościowa i jakościowa ukazuje bogactwo znaczeń i funkcji pragmatycznej badanych wykrzykników. Jakkolwiek wykrzykniki bez *-k-* i z *-k-* mogą się pojawić w podobnych kontekstach, wyniki analizy skłaniają do wniosku, że wykrzykniki deminutywne mają silniejsze zabarwienie emocjonalne w porównaniu z wykrzyknikami bez *-k-*, a czasem są też używa-

ne do złagodzenia negatywnej emocji lub sytuacji. Ponadto wnioski płynące z przeprowadzonych analiz rzucają światło na rzadsze warianty deminutywów we współczesnej polszczyźnie.

Słowa kluczowe

wykrzykniki, deminutywa, korpus, analiza ilościowa, analiza jakościowa, język polski

1. Introduction¹

In Polish, there are some interjections that are arguably diminutives, including (*o*)*jejku* (< (*o*)*jej*) and their variants. Many Polish diminutives are first-degree; that is, with only one diminutive suffix, such as *domek* ‘house.DIM’ and *piesek* ‘dog.DIM’, though additional diminutive suffixes can be added to create second and third-degree diminutives. In addition, Polish diminutives of the first degree tend to be formed with the addition of the diminutive *-k-* affix, which – particularly in the case of nouns – shows a degree of speaker attitude towards the referent. This paper argues that, like many diminutive nouns, the diminutive forms of interjections also convey speaker attitude. However, since diminutive interjections derive from interjections that are in themselves expressions of emotion, they primarily convey additional intensity and/or emotional depth. That is, while the derived/underived interjections ‘mean the same,’ I argue that there is an enhanced emotion in the diminutive interjections; they add a sense of endearment (e.g. concern, tenderness) and/or serve to ‘soften’ a negative situation in the speaker’s mind, thus making it more bearable (‘little’ and ‘friendly’). The *National Corpus of Polish* (NKJP), and microblogging site Twitter provide many examples of these forms. The examples in (1) provide some current uses of these interjections (my translation); (1a) includes *ojejku* (from *ojej*), while (1b) derives from the interjection *jej*.

- (1) a. **Ojejku.** Tak mi przykro 😊 Współczuję
 ‘**Ojejku.** I’m so sorry 😊 I sympathize [feel with you]’ [Twitter]
 b. List, Debren? Jaki list? Wysłałeś do mnie list? Naprawdę? **Jejku!**
 ‘Letter, Debren? What kind of letter? You sent me a letter? Really? **Jejku!**’ [NKJP]

The paper applies a synchronic corpus analysis to approach two main diminutive interjections (DIs), specifically (*o*)*jejku* and *ojejku*. I will briefly consider the variant forms *jejciu* and *ojejciu*, which end with the *-ciu* diminutive suffix. I chose these interjections because they are the most common Polish interjections

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that receive diminutive suffixes.² Despite the vast literature on Polish diminutives, these derived interjections have received little attention and have only been mentioned briefly (e.g. Wierzbicka 2003). The paper fills this gap by showing the various uses and forms of DIs in contemporary Polish, particularly in regards to their emotional meanings in their immediate contexts. The paper descriptively draws on data gathered from the NKJP and Twitter in order to present collocations, frequencies and ‘real-life’ examples of these forms in their immediate contexts.

Section 2 discusses the relevant literature on diminutives and interjections in Polish, while Section 3 describes the definitions of diminutive interjections, which is followed by a quantitative corpus analysis in Section 4. In Section 5, I turn to qualitative corpus analysis, and conclude the paper in Section 6.

2. Setting the scene

2.1. Diminutives and interjections

There is an extensive and varied literature on diminutives, augmentatives and similar evaluative morphemes which are used in Polish to convey various attitudes and emotions (see e.g. Wierzbicka 1992). In particular, noun diminutivization has been extensively studied in Polish (e.g. Manova and Winternitz 2011; Wierzbicka 2003). However, diminutive interjections can benefit greatly from an evaluative and corpus approach in order to show their functions and range of emotional colouring. Polish is a treasure-trove of diminutives and hence the focus of this study.

Because Polish is a synthetic language, it has many diminutive suffixes that can be attached to mass nouns (e.g. *dom-ek* < *dom* ‘house’), adjectives (e.g. *mal-utki* < *mały* ‘small’), adverbs (e.g. *szyb-ciuśko* < *szybko* ‘quickly’), verbs (e.g. *plak-usiać* < *plakać* ‘to cry’), and even interjections. Multiple diminutive suffixes, each with a slightly different ‘flavour,’ can be added to one base, e.g. *mal-eńki*, *mal-utki*, *mal-uchny*, *mal-uśki*, *ma-ciupki*, *ma-ciu-peńki*, and *ma-ciu-ciupki* (reduplication of the softer and more endearing *-ciu* diminutive suffix³) from the adjective *mały* ‘small/little’ (cf. Stankiewicz 1964).

² There are also more recent and innovative forms that end in *-ki* (e.g. *sor-ki* ‘sorry.DIM’, *jej-ki* ‘gosh.DIM’) that are primarily used in internet language. Ogiermann (2009: 98) aptly describes these interjections as the following: “Since Polish words ending in ‘y’ are usually plural forms, this has led to the formation of a diminutive plural form which, according to the rules of Polish morphology, has resulted in the form *sorki*” and also the diminutive interjection *(o)jejki*, etc. This follows the pattern of adding slang/plural *-s* to English diminutive interjections (e.g. *whoa-ie-s* or *oops-ie-s*). In this paper, however, I focus on the singular forms of diminutive interjections and leave a discussion of the plural diminutive for a future study.

³ The *-ciu* suffix resulted from the well-attested ‘morphological palatalization’ whereby the ‘standard’ *-k-* diminutive suffix became *-ć-*. In turn, these “soft of palatal consonants have a spe-

Diminutives have been traditionally linked with children (small size), females, affection, ‘dear’ and ‘little’ (cf. Prieto 2015) and ‘fictive’ (cf. Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 1994). In addition, while diminutives may be used in positive situations, they also make negative situations “more bearable and easy to cope with [...] we refer to it with a diminutive to make it look smaller, less important, or even pathetic” (Gorzycka 2010: 153). Thus, there are multiple semantic-pragmatic meanings that may be attributed to diminutives.

Diminutives denote attitude and/or size (see e.g. Wierzbicka 2003) by the features of [-big], [+emotional] and [+informal] (cf. Spasovski 2012). However, because of the exceptionally frequent use of diminutives in Polish, “the category is so productive itself that almost any potential innovation can be found as a correct, acceptable word in standard adult Polish” (Haman 2003: 43). Because of this (over-)frequent use, it has been claimed that the nouns formed with this affix “have lost their diminutive semantics and now express unmarked (neutral) meanings, whereas their bases without *-k-* are felt as augmentatives” (Manova 2011: 134); that is, items that convey enlargement, ugliness and often pejorative meanings (for a discussion of augmentatives, see e.g. Klimaszewska 1983; Wierzbicka 1984). While this might accurately describe lexicalized diminutives (e.g. *jajko* ‘egg’ < *jajo*) or contexts where a diminutive is typically expected (e.g. describing a child’s nose as *nosek* rather than *nos*), other research has shown the constant underlying expression of attitude – not necessarily of size – of diminutive nouns with the *-k-* affix (see e.g. Szymanek 2010). How this diminutive suffix may affect interjections is a central question posed in this paper.

Interjections, as another way of expressing emotion, have been studied in present-day Polish (e.g. Daković 2006; Bednarczyk 2014; Wierzbicka 2003). It has been established that Polish has many interjections; some of these are fixed sequences that contain DIs, such as *jejku jej*, which is similar in structure to English *wowie wow*, for example. Polish interjections can be classified as ‘primary’ (e.g. *oj* ‘oh/ouch’, *fe* ‘yuck’, and *och* ‘oh’) or ‘secondary’ (e.g. *psiakrew* ‘dog’s blood’ and *cholera* ‘damn’) (cf. Ameka 1992), which are derived from a full lexical item or have “homonymic forms in other parts of speech with meanings in the domains of religion, sex or bodily excretion” (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 135). The diminutive interjections under study are considered ‘primary’ in contemporary Polish. Furthermore, interjections are commonly defined as items (sometimes ‘non-words’) that primarily convey emotion. They do not contribute to the propositional content of the sentence (cf. Ameka 1992), they are often considered deictic in nature (referring only to the speaker’s emotion) and they sometimes take on discursive structuring functions (cf. Aijmer 2013) as emotive communication “to express conversational engagement and

cial expressive function, i.e. that of emphasizing endearments [and are] found in the vocabulary of baby talk” (Szpyra 1995: 31).

support” (Pavlenko 2009: 49). Last, interjections typically stand alone and are arguably entire utterances (see e.g. Ameka 1992; Ljung 2010).

Although diminutive nouns, adjectives and adverbs are particularly frequent in Polish, diminutive forms of interjections are generally rare in the Germanic and Slavic languages. Some exist in Polish, namely (o)*jej-ku* and its variant (o)*jej-ciu* that come from the base interjection *jej*. To the best of my knowledge, the diminutive suffix *-ku* is not added to any other base interjection in Polish (e.g. **och-ku*, **oj-ku* or **ech-ku*). Other languages have DIs, such as English *whoops-ie* and *wow-ie* (see Lockyer 2014), German *hallö-chen* ‘hello.DIM’ < *hallo* (Schneider 2003), Russian *privet-ik* ‘hi.DIM’, Bulgarian *oh-če* ‘oh.DIM’, and Slovene “*Madona* > *Madon-ca*; *mašina* > *mašin-ca*” (Sicherl 2013: 251–252). These Slovenian DIs are translated by Sicherl as the mild interjections *gosh*, *my goodness*, *Great Scott*, *oh gosh* and *good heavens*. As DIs have rarely been discussed in Polish and English, it is uncertain to what extent these function as diminutives, or what semantic-pragmatic meanings they may have, except for the assumptions that are made from the diminutive suffix.

Although the meanings of diminutive interjections have yet to be pinpointed, some semantic-pragmatic meanings of interjections – including their diminutive forms – have been broadly identified and include ‘surprise,’ ‘empathy,’ ‘fear,’ ‘unwillingness,’ ‘irritation,’ ‘suffering,’ and ‘happiness’ (as shown in Sieradzka and Hrycyna 1996, my translation). However, both diminutive and non-diminutive interjections are listed under these emotions, which suggests that while both forms can express the same general meaning, diminutive interjections contain some similar, and some different, emotional ‘flavour’ that is found within the conceptual space of diminutives. For example, under ‘surprise,’ it is claimed that (o)*jej* and *jejku* express the sentiment ‘I am surprised and I admire it. That is amazing,’ likewise, *ojej* and (o)*jejku* express the sentiment of ‘it is wonderful, great, I am delighted’ (202). The only time that the derived form is separate from the underived form is *ovejku* in ‘I am sorry, I feel grief (sorrow, regret), I am grief-stricken’ under the broad sense of ‘empathy’ (203). This is supported by Ponsonnet (2014: 98–99), who argues that in Dala-bon, non-noun diminutives “can have a softening function, downplaying some aspect or situation [...] to attract compassion, or to ‘soften others’”, which likely can be attributed to Polish DIs as well. Thus, empathy, sympathy, sorrow and regret is a good place to start for distinguishing the emotional meanings between diminutive and underived interjections.

2.2. Data and Methodology

The paper examines the diminutive interjections comparatively in monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, the *National Corpus of Polish* (NKJP), and the micro-blogging site Twitter. It is corpus-driven and inductive; that is, I explore

the meanings taken from corpus examples. A comparison of dictionary entries is able to suggest the translation equivalents and possible meanings. However, as Manova and Winternitz (2011) also encountered in their methodology, the colloquial style of diminutives often prevents them from inclusion in dictionaries; but I found the few entries to provide some suggestive results. The lexicographic treatment contributes to the corpus linguistic analysis which uses the NKJP and 'live' mines Twitter for derived interjections. I use Twitter for qualitative examples that can be viewed within 'conversations' or as single tweets. Besides anonymizing the tweets, I have only considered 'public' tweets; that is, tweets shown to anyone on Twitter (see Lockyer 2014 for using Twitter as a corpus of English DIs) and, while difficult to verify, to the best of my knowledge every example comes from a different speaker. I have chosen the NKJP because it is a well-constructed national corpus with sources from various genres, including written (e.g. novels, internet forum posts) and speech. It contains 1.5 billion tokens in the full version, and 240 million in the balanced version (this paper will use the full version unless otherwise noted).

There are some limitations because these examples cannot be analyzed for vocal cues or facial expressions; also, we cannot ask the speakers why they used the DI. As this is not a sociolinguistic or ethnographic paper, it does not take into account sociolinguistic variables (e.g. sex or age); rather, this paper aims to analyze what the items convey based on immediate context rather than what the writers actually felt.⁴ Following Norrick (2015: 249), the corpus "is particularly important for the study of interjections [and] is necessary to reveal their distribution and range of functions." In this way written corpora can be useful, and Twitter in particular can show new and innovative forms that have not reached the national corpus. The data in these corpora should give the scope and variability needed for this study.

3. Defining diminutive interjections

Entries from the three monolingual dictionaries, *Słownik języka polskiego* PWN, *Słownik języka polskiego* by W. Doroszewski (ed.), and *Słownik języka polskiego*, suggest that the variants *ojej*, *jej* and *jejku* have similar meanings and usages.⁵ Their definitions are shown in Table 1 (my translation, accessed 27 June 2015).

⁴ These interjections will not be in the active linguistic inventory of each Polish speaker. Many speakers may never use DIs. Conversely, others may use them frequently. Thus, any results cannot be generalized for all Polish speakers, but rather (mostly online) speakers who use DIs.

⁵ I also checked the *Wielki słownik języka polskiego* (WSJP), accessed at www.wsjp.pl 17 November 2015, but it did not provide hits for any of the diminutive interjections or *ojej*.

Table 1. Monolingual dictionary entries

<i>Słownik języka polskiego</i> PWN, URL: www.sjp.pwn.pl	Ojej (incl. oj): 'interjection expressing emotional reactions to different sensations' Jej/jejku: 'interjection expressing a spontaneous emotional reaction'
<i>Słownik języka polskiego</i> W. Doroszewski (ed.)	Ojej: 'emotional exclamation of various feelings – surprise, impatience, admiration, fear, horror or confirmation'
<i>Słownik języka polskiego</i> (SJP), URL: www.sjp.pl	Ojej, jej, jejku, jejciu, etc.: interjection expressing different emotional states, for example admiration, helplessness, fear, threat, surprise, etc., often amplifying speech; oj, ojoj, ojoj, ojeju, ojejej, ojejk, joj, jej, jejciu, jejku Ojejk: 'exclamation expressing surprise, embarrassment, fright'

Although the dictionaries in Table 1 separate the interjections *ojej/oj*, *jejk/jej* in different ways, they imply that the diminutive and underived interjections are similar in meaning. The only difference in attitude is indicated by the treatment of the interjections. For example, the SJP gives *ojejku* its own entry and definition, and effectively narrows down the potential meanings of *ojejku* to surprise, embarrassment and fright. In the other two dictionaries, *ojejku* is notably absent. In comparison, the underived interjection *ojej* appears in each dictionary, suggesting that *ojej* is a multi-purpose interjection that expresses various feelings. Otherwise, the second dictionary only acknowledges *ojej*, while PWN separates *ojej* from *jej/jejk*, and gives the same definition for *jej* and *jejk*, thus disregarding the diminutive suffix of *jejk*. Only the SJP acknowledges a function besides expressing emotion, namely 'amplifying speech', for all of the interjections except *ojejku*. In sum, the comparison of the monolingual dictionaries shows some differences between these interjections, particularly in regards to spontaneity, specific feelings, and the distinctive difference between *ojej* and *ojejku*.

The bilingual dictionaries do not include many of the interjections. The interjections *jejiu* and *ojejiu* only appear in Google Translate, as 'geez' and 'oh wow' respectively, while the variants *jejk* and *ojej* are often translated as mild interjections including 'oh dear', 'oh my', 'my word' or 'gosh'. The translation equivalents given by bilingual dictionaries including *Wielki słownik polsko-angielski*, Google Translate, *poltran.com*, *Glosbe* and *diki.pl*, are shown in (2).

(2) *Jej!* → *my!, wow!, dearie me!*

Jejku! → *dear me!, oh my!, wow!, gosh!, oh boy!, golly!, oh dear!, jeez!*

Jejiu! → *geez!*

Ojej! → *oh dear!, oh my!, gee!, oops!, whoops!, oh!, aw shucks!, aw!, cripes!, my word!, gosh!*

Ojejk! → *oh my!, holy dooley!, oops!*

Ojejiu! → *oh wow!*

The interjections and translation equivalents often overlap; for example, the negative *geez/jeez* as equivalents for *jejk* and *jejiu*; the reaction (indicating a mistake or accident), *oops/whoops*, for *ojejk* and *ojej*; the reaction of *oh my*

for *jejku*, *ovej*, and *ovejku*; the generally positive *wow* for *jejku* and *jej*; and the indication of surprise, *gosh*, for *jejku* and *ovej*. Generally, these support the various meanings given by Sieradzka and Hrycyna (1996) with the exception of a strong connection to empathy/sympathy. They also support Kryk-Kastowsky's (1997: 159) comment that "the interjections *oj/ovej* are typical linguistic exponents of surprise (though not restricted to surprise)." The DIs that were given rather unique equivalents were *ovejciu* with the positive expression of positive surprise through *oh wow*; *ovejku* with *holy Dooley*;⁶ and *jej* with the relatively old-fashioned but diminutive form *dearie me* and simple *my*. Wierzbicka (2003: 320) marks *ovejku* as a "childish derivate" that can appear in various ways, such as sounding 'cute' (if positive), or 'infantile' or 'whiny' (if negative); however, the dictionary equivalents suggest that the picture is more complex.

Lastly, based on the number of potential translation equivalents found in the bilingual dictionaries, and the inclusion or exclusion of each item in monolingual dictionaries, it follows that the non-diminutive interjection *ovej* is used most frequently. It has the largest number of potential meanings, ranging from surprise, reaction due to an accident, disappointment, and a potentially positive reaction, while *jejku* is the most frequent diminutive interjection. Its meanings range from delight, surprise/shock and annoyance, which roughly overlap with *ovej*. Thus, the dictionaries suggest that if a speaker decides to use a diminutive interjection, the 'standard' choice would be first *jejku*, followed by *ovejku*, and (*o*)*ovejciu*.

In sum, the high frequency of *ovej* (and likely other similar interjections, including *oj* and *o*) is likely due to the fact that they are cognitively (and emotionally) 'simplex,' a concept developed by Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994). 'Simplex' forms are the shortest phonologically, can be more quickly exclaimed, and have less emotional depth. Diminutive forms can be considered more 'complex,' that is, they consist of more elements (namely the diminutive suffix) which add additional speaker attitude. Because of their specific emotional meanings and morphological complexity, they are less likely to be used (as we can compare with English *whoops* vs. *whoopsie*). The concept may be described as follows, where the underived interjection is the 'standard' or 'simple' response, while the interjection is made more complex through the addition of the diminutive suffix.

- (3) a. INTJ (e.g. *jej*, *ovej*) = 'emotional reaction'
- b. INTJ 'emotional response' + *-k* > INTJ 'emotional reaction that conveys [+little] (deeper/ 'softer') emotional reaction' (e.g. *jejku*)

Some (non-semantic) factors like register/style and idiolect can make the diminutive meaning unpredictable. However, pragmatic and stylistic factors

⁶ According to Internet sources (e.g. UrbanDictionary.com), *holy dooley* is an Australian slang term of surprise, and is similar to *good heavens*.

aside, the diminutive interjection in Polish (and perhaps also in English) can be broadly defined as the following: ‘a lexical form that primarily shows speaker emotion and conveys additional attitudinal meaning of [+little] from the diminutive affix.’ Overall, if viewed from the appropriate perspective, (o)*jejku* meets the formal and semantic-pragmatic requirements for inclusion as a diminutive.

The extremely frequent use of diminutive affixes by Poles, as established in Section 2, the slightly different treatment of *ojejku* and *jejku* Polish dictionaries, the addition of the suffix, and Wierzbicka’s ‘childish’ and ‘longer variant’ labels suggest that DIs are somewhat different from underived interjections. While it is not possible to quantitatively measure the ‘diminutivity’ of *jejku* and *ojejku* based on size, I argue that it may be measured by their attitudinal use(s) in context, their limited senses and their depth of feeling primarily caused by the diminutive suffix. All of these point to diminutive meaning, which I describe in Sections 4 and 5.

4. NKJP results for the ‘standard’ and alternative diminutive interjections

In the previous section, the dictionary entries and translations showed the possible semantic range and implied the frequency of each interjection based on whether the DI was listed in the dictionaries. In Table 2, I present the raw frequency hits for the interjections from the NKJP (the DIs are in bold).

Table 2. Raw frequencies of interjections in the NKJP

Interjection	Total # of hits
<i>Ojej</i>	3817
<i>Jejku</i>	1615
<i>Jejciu</i>	147
<i>Jejkuś</i>	15
<i>Ojejku</i>	547
<i>Ojejciu</i>	29
<i>Ojejkuś</i>	8
<i>O jejku</i>	279
<i>O jejciu</i>	19
<i>O jejkuś</i>	1

Specifically, Table 2 shows that *ojej*, an underived interjection, is the most frequent interjection in this group with about twice as many hits as *jejku*. The second most frequent items are *jejku* and *ojejku*, and I have included the

variants (*o*)*jejciu* and (*o*)*jejkuś* to show that the DIs with the *-ku* suffix are the 'standard' forms, used nearly ten times more often than with *-ciu*. *Jejku*, and its variants, however still are twice as frequent as *ojejku* and its variations, which shows the more limited range of possible uses for *ojejku*.

The use of interjections is arguably not random and follows a general pattern that is largely dependent on the immediate context and speaker intensity. The balanced⁷ NKJP provides collocates for each interjection; specifically, the words that appear immediately before or after the node. The NKJP also calculates the chi-square test, which shows how likely a word collocates by chance (see e.g. McEnery et al. 2006); thus, the results that the table presents are organized by statistical significance. Overall, Table 3 shows differences between the three DIs, beginning with *ojej*, which collocates most often (at 46 collocates), to *jejku* (with 10) and *ojejku* (with 4). It also shows the normalized frequencies of each collocation in order to show whether the collocate more likely immediately follows or precedes the node. Generally, a collocate is more likely to directly follow the node because interjections are typically sentence-initial.

The infrequent use of *jejciu* and *ojejciu* is likely why the balanced NKJP does not provide any collocates for these derivations. (The full NKJP gives 10 collocates for *jejciu*, but these are either frequent internet forum terms or usernames, except for *o* 'oh,' *to* 'that,' *ale* 'but' and *ja* 'I.') Table 3 also shows reduplication, the discourse marker *no*, orality (shown through the dash that initiates running speech), and the interjection *o*, which will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

The results suggest that reduplication, as a method of giving more force to the emotion expressed through the interjection (see e.g. Nübling 2004 on the reduplication of interjections), is significant in the cases of *ojej* and *jejku* but not *ojejku*. In the case of *ojej* and *jejku*, the reduplicative form immediately precedes or follows the interjection, creating *ojej ojej* and *jejku jejku*. Reduplicative *ojejku ojejku* is used rarely in comparison with the other two interjections; in fact, a search of the NKJP provides only three hits for *ojejku ojejku*, but 66 for *jejku jejku* (including *o jejku jejku*) and 64 for *ojej ojej*. Thus, *ojejku* differs from *ojej* and *jejku* based on reduplication.

The marker *no* 'well' collocates for all three interjections, though it is the most frequent collocate for *ojejku*, the fourth for *jejku* and tenth for *jejku*. It is unsurprising to find *no* in Table 3 because the particle is used extremely frequently in Polish, particularly in the spoken register to add "expressive, emphatic or intensifying quality to another word or another utterance" (Weidner 2013: 148). Since diminutive interjections stand alone, *no* can directly preface *jejku* (e.g. *no jejku*) for intensification; but in the NKJP, it is more common for

⁷ I have opted to use the balanced NKJP rather than the full corpus in order to balance the number collocates from internet forums (e.g. usernames), where these DIs are used most often.

Table 3. Collocations and their normalized frequencies for *ojej*, *jejkę* and *ojejku* in the balanced NKJP

#	Ojej	Collocations	Jejku	Collocations	Ojejku	Collocations
1.	ojej	ojej ojej (42)	jejkę	jejkę jejkę (12)	no 'well'	ojejku no (5), no ojejku (2)
2.	jaś [a name]	jaś ojej (4), ojej jasiu (1)	nika19 [a username]	nika19 jejkę (10)	-	- ojejku (9), ojejku - (1)
3.	-	- ojej (156), ojej - (35)	o 'oh'	o jejkę (58), jejkę o (2)	a 'and/but'	ojejku a (5)
4.	przepraszając 'to apologize'	ojej przepraszam (6)	no 'well'	jejkę no (9), no jejkę (4)	to 'this/that'	to ojejku (3), ojejku to (3)
5.	no 'well'	ojej no (15), no ojej (2)	ja 'I'	jejkę ja (9)		
6.	ale 'but'	ojej ale (29), ale ojej (2)	ale 'but'	jejkę ale (7)		
7.	mówić 'to speak/say'	mówi ojej (4), ojej mówi (3), mówią ojej (2), ojej mówisz (1), etc.*	to 'this/that'	jejkę to (11)		
8.	myśleć 'to think'	ojej myśle (2), myślę ojej (1), ojej myślisz (1), etc.	a 'and/but'	jejkę a (6), a jejkę (2)		
9.	ja 'I/me'	ojej ja (14), ja ojej (2)	on 'he'	jejkę nie (4), nie jejkę (1)		
10.	to 'this/that'	ojej to (37), to ojej (4)	-	- jejkę (9), jejkę - (1)		
11.	trochę 'a little'	ojej trochę (5)				

* For #7 and #8, the NKJP provides the frequencies of past and present tense forms of the conjugated verbs (e.g. s/he says ojej, ojej s/he says, they say ojej, ojej you say ojej; ojej I think, I think ojej, ojej you think, they think ojej). I have only provided the most frequent. Overall, the most frequent collocations here are in the present tense.

no to directly follow the interjection than to preface it. Although the difference between the top collocations of *ovej*, *jejku* and *ovejku* with *no* are marginal, these seem to suggest that *ovejku* is found often in contexts that require some reflection, deeper emotion and/or thought, while *ovej* may be said more spontaneously. Although other factors arguably are involved in the choice of interjection, *no* may point to *ovejku* as more emotionally complex. Furthermore, *ovejku* stands out as more restricted because all the collocates of *ovejku* are also collocates of the other two interjections, including the conjunction *a* ‘and/but’ and the particle *to* ‘this/that’.

The dash, vocalic *o* and internet forum usernames may be misleading or irrelevant. For example, the dash, which initiates running speech in Polish, is the third collocate for *ovej*, the tenth for *jejku*, and the second for *ovejku*. Since posts on internet forums do not use such dashes, and the dash would mainly apply to literary texts, it is unlikely that these have any bearing on the DIs’ emotional meanings. Likewise, *jaś* and *nika19* are internet forum usernames that often appeared in the immediate contexts of these interjections. Finally, *ja* ‘I’ is a collocate only for *jejku*, and only directly follows *jejku*. This could suggest that *jejku* is used with more self-focus than *ovej* or *ovejku*, but I leave this possibility outside the scope of this paper.

The long list of collocates for the underived *ovej* shows the significantly larger number of spoken and written contexts that it may be found in compared with diminutive (*o*)*jejku*. For example, *ovej* appears to be used in conversation (indicated by the verb *powiedzieć* ‘to say’ and *mówić* ‘to speak’), after making a mistake (indicated by the verb *przepraszać* ‘to apologize/excuse oneself’), to indicate a thought or opinion (through *myśleć* ‘to think’), and to diminish something (indicated by *troche* ‘a little’). Although these collocates are more statistically significant with *ovej*, they also occur with (*o*)*jejku* because DIs are generally used less frequently than their underived forms and it is more difficult to find significant collocations.

Unfortunately, collocates show little about the degree of emotion and also the semantic-pragmatic senses shown by the DI and underived interjections. Section 5 will show how these DIs can be – and often are – used in social media and in the NKJP based on a combination of their semantic-pragmatic aspects and the collocates discussed above.

5. Central senses of the diminutive interjection

Since previous studies about the semantics-pragmatics of diminutives focus on nouns and occasionally adjectives and adverbs, the general meanings and functions found by such studies arguably cannot be directly applied to interjections. Theoretically, when slightly rephrased, some previous diminutive

research may also apply to diminutive interjections. For example, DIs likely show a conceptual subjective closeness between the reaction to the unmarked situation (the unfriendly ‘other people’) and the reaction to the situation that evokes a diminutive form (the friendly ‘little world’) (Gorzycka 2010: 151; Dabašinskienė and Voiejkova 2015: 228). This subjective closeness contributes to the ‘diminutive effect’ (Inchaurrealde 1997: 139); that is, we feel closer to the situation that causes us to react with a DI, and “we make it enter our personal space by reducing its [metaphorical] dimensions” (Inchaurrealde 1997: 139). In a positive scenario, “we use diminutives to express our psychological closeness [to the person and/or situation that we react to] and a positive attitude” (Gorzycka 2010: 153). Thus, it is important to re-state that interjections are primarily emotive without a diminutive suffix, which makes them more difficult to classify within most theoretical paradigms about diminutives.

Jurafsky (1996) claims that the core semantic sense of the diminutive is ‘child’ because we naturally feel affection for children; however, although ‘child’ often has a significant place, I replace ‘child’ with ‘little’ (cf. Prieto 2015), which is more appropriate to explain the ‘diminutive effect’ in adult speech. Besides the possible smaller (metaphorical) dimensions of ‘little,’ the diminutive is also evaluative; it can be used in the sense of ‘affection’ between adults but also include ‘child’ in the periphery. The sense of ‘child’ can be used in the context of child-like behaviour, including ‘cute,’ ‘infantile,’ or ‘whiny.’ These were briefly suggested in Table 3, which showed the frequent collocates of *no* ‘well’ and reduplication (e.g. *jejku jejku*). In turn, these senses can intensify speech. Overall, when applied to interjections instead of objects, the combined categories of ‘little,’ ‘child’ and ‘affection’ should cause DIs to function like noun diminutives by softening reactions, making a situation seem less serious, and minimizing our emotional reactions caused by negative situations. However, I found this not necessarily to be the case. My analysis shows that diminutive interjections do several core things, which are based on the semantics and pragmatic functions of the base interjection. These include (but are not limited to):

- conveying sympathy and giving support (e.g. ‘I feel for you; I feel grief-stricken, sorrowful, etc.’);
- exaggerating and intensifying an emotion or reaction;
- conveying the sense of ‘cute’ or ‘infantile’;
- showing affection (e.g. ‘I like/love you’; ‘I appreciate and am grateful for you’);
- reacting to a mistake (e.g. ‘I am embarrassed’).

Semantically, DIs can convey several emotions, ranging from ‘fear’ to ‘surprise’ to ‘sadness.’ However, they do not convey rage or strong negativity. I show in the following sub-sections that diminutive interjections generally come across as more passionate, yet paradoxically tender or endearing, depending on the suffix.

5.1. Sympathy and support

On Twitter, sympathy and support are often demonstrated through the use of a diminutive interjection. There are numerous types of situations that elicit sympathy from tweeters, ranging from the death of a loved one (example 4) to an accident or even minor situations such as a stomach-ache.

- (4) @username mój wujek zmarł ☹
 @username1 **jejku**, biedna ☹ współczuje ci... Trzymaj się x
 @username dziękuję
 'my uncle died ☹
jejku, poor thing ☹ I sympathize with you... Hold on x
 thank you'

Specifically, the tweeter reacts with *jejku* and expressions of sympathy due to the death of the other tweeter's uncle.

Although learning that a close friend lost her relative evokes a strong reaction, the effects of war and terrorism on our emotions also highlight core senses of sympathy, grief, and concern that is not connected to 'child.' In the immediate aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks on 13 November 2015, Polish tweeters conveyed sorrow, concern and sympathy towards the French. In these tweets, diminutive forms of interjections were used, specifically *jejku*. The negative bias of the base interjection is emphasized through the use of the unhappy face and immediate context. For example, in (5) the tweeters use strong context such as *biedne* 'poor' and *straszne* 'terrible'; thus, their reaction with *jejku* indicates how deeply the situation affected them.

- (5) a. #PrayForParis
 Wczoraj był piątek 13...
 Dziś jest 14. Moje urodziny.
 A ja teraz boje się zasnąć. Zginęło tyle ludzi... **Jejku** :(
 '#PrayForParis
 Yesterday was Friday the 13th...
 Today is the 14th. My birthday.
 And now I'm afraid to fall asleep. So many people died... **Jejku** :('
- b. o **jejku** ☹ biedni francuzi. Nigdy nie zrozumim jk ludzie moga robic cos takiego innym ludziom
 'o **jejku** the poor French. I'll never understand how people can do something like this to other people'
- c. Straszne. **Jejku**, brak mi słów #PrayForParis
 'Terrible. **Jejku**, I have no words #PrayForParis'

Because of the horrific situation, it is not conceivable that tweeters would use DIs to make the tragedy seem 'childish,' playful or non-serious. Instead, the tweeters' use of the diminutive interjection shows their comprehension of the

situation and suggests their close connection to each other and to the horrific situation because diminutives “are characterized by a high degree of cooperativeness and a low degree of psychological distance” (Dabašinskienė and Voieikova 2015: 209). These two conditions stem from the “sense of intimacy” (Farman 2012: 67) on social media that creates an environment of perceived closeness to other people and places. In turn, this (false) perception of intimacy and familiarity allows for the inclusion of diminutive forms to amplify reactions and to convey empathy and sympathy. In sum, the emotional landscape of Twitter and the feelings evoked by the situation may be important factors as to why tweeters (either consciously or subconsciously) choose *jejku* instead of (o)*jej*.

The choice of diminutive interjection also shows something of the tweeters’ similar reactions. Twenty hours from the start of the crisis, only the DI (o)*jejku* had been used; I could find no hits for *ojejku*, *jejciu* or *ojejciu* in reference to the event (except one tweet with *ojej*, and one with *jejkuś*). The fact that *jejku* was the main diminutive interjection used shows its distinctive connotations. It also contributes towards the fact that the *-k-* suffix has become more ‘neutral’ by a greater reduction in the diminutive meaning than the other diminutive suffixes, a position which is supported by DI frequency in the NKJP. Thus, a diminutive interjection with *-ciu* would be less appropriate in the context of a terrorist attack. For example, in (6) the tweeters convey their reactions using the hashtag #PrayForParis and strongly emotive co-text, such as *martwie o nich* ‘I fear for them’ in (6a). In (6b), the tweeter mentions that the people in the stadium are *przestraszani* ‘afraid’ and in (6c) the tweeter adds that she is crying.

- (6) a. **Jejku** strasznie sie martwie o nich #PrayForParis
 ‘**Jejku** I’m terribly frightened for them #PrayForParis’
 b. **Jejku** ci ludzie na stadionie są tacy przestraszani #PrayForParis
 ‘**Jejku** the people in the stadium are so frightened #PrayForParis’
 c. **Jejku** płaczę.. #PrayForParis
 ‘**Jejku** I’m crying.. #PrayForParis’

Although diminutive interjections in Polish can convey many emotions, the feelings of empathy/sympathy and sorrow/regret, as mentioned in Section 2, are arguably some of the overarching emotions that are connected to DIs. This strong connection is likely due to the fact that in order to feel regret or convey sympathy, we must process the bad situation in greater psychological depth than, for example, the simplex and often-involuntary *oj* that we might say after a rather minor event, such as stubbing a toe.

5.2. Exaggeration and repetition

One way we emphasize heightened emotions is through reduplication and/or repetition; these devices may often be strengthened by exclamation marks

to indicate emphatic prosody. Example (7) shows the role of these devices in strengthening the emotions conveyed by the speaker, and sometimes the sense of ‘child’ by strong emotion (excitement or dismay) and exaggeration. Although *jejku* was the primary DI used to express sympathy and sorrow for Paris, the contexts in (7) show that *jejku* can convey strongly positive attitudes. For example, in (7a) the reduplication *jejku jejku* amplifies the tweet and emotional colouring, while the preceding question *serio* ‘seriously’ and emotive comment *ale fajnie* ‘so cool’ strongly contribute to each tweeter’s expression of excitement, anticipation and/or pleasure.

- (7) a. Serio? Ale fajnie! **Jejku jejku**, ja chcę do Grecji! Obawiam się, że [NKJP]
 ‘Seriously? So cool! **Jejku jejku**, I want to go to Greece! I’m afraid that’
 b. **Jejku!** To jest fantastyczne! Znalazłam naszą bazę w Regetowie z nieba! [NKJP]
 ‘**Jejku!** This is fantastic! I found our base in Regietów from the sky!’
 c. **Jejku!!!!** To ja chyba też zavrzę – wieczny problem o te cholerne [NKJP]
 ‘**Jejku!!!!** I’ll probably also drop by – the eternal problem of the damned’

As in (7a), example (7b) also conveys considerable excitement through the adjective *fantastyczne* ‘fantastic’, the context of finding something good, all of which is emphasized through exclamation marks. Example (7c), on the other hand, mainly conveys surprise – and perhaps some irony by referring to oneself as the ‘damned’ – through the use of four exclamation marks.

5.3. ‘Children’

Because diminutives are often conceptually linked to children (cf. Jurafsky 1996), diminutive interjections can seem ‘cute’ or ‘infantile’/‘juvenile’. The attitude taken depends largely on the hearer’s subjective point of view, terminology, the diminutive suffix used and/or the immediate context. In particular, the ‘child’ connotations of *ojejciu* are realized through the additional diminutives that appear in the immediate context. When two or more diminutives are in one tweet, the ‘childish’ effect is strengthened, as shown in (8) from Twitter.

- (8) a. **ojejciu**, coś mnie brzuszek zabolął
 ‘**ojejciu**, my stomach.DIM [started to] hurt’
 b. **ojejciu** jaka malutka stópka!!!! dam znać na pewno ★
 ‘**ojejciu** what a little.DIM foot.DIM!!!! that’s for sure ★’
 c. @username **ojejciu** ale super, kocham vamppettes ♡haha
 ‘**ojejciu** but that’s super, I love vamppettes ♡haha’

In (8a), the tweeter adds the diminutive *brzuszek* (< *brzuch*) ‘stomach.DIM’ show an attitude towards his painful stomach. In (8b) two diminutives, *malutka stópka* ‘little.DIM foot.DIM’, together with *ojejciu*, illustrate the tender feelings towards the little foot. In (8c), the feminine ending in ‘vamppettes’

(from ‘vampires’), and the ring of hearts emoticon (along with the verb *kocham* ‘I love’) emphasize the ‘female’ sense that Jurafsky (1996) links directly with ‘child’. In these tweets, it can be suggested that *ojejciu* conveys more endearment/tenderness and ‘littleness’ than *ovej*, *ovejku*, and *jejku*.⁸

In (o)*jejsiu* there exists an alternate and considerably less frequent version of *jejciu* which, based on the context of the few Twitter examples (and no hits on the NKJP), is most likely part of the tweeter’s idiolect. Unlike (o)*jejciu* this diminutive interjection does not co-occur with diminutives. Instead, *jejsiu* in (9) indicates, with the unhappy face, the tweeter’s misery about turning eighteen, and arguably functions to elicit sympathy or pity.

- (9) **Jejsiu** i’m 18! Tak bardzo tego nie chce:
 ‘**Jejsiu** I’m 18! I so badly don’t want to be:’

Because diminutive suffixes add diminutive meaning to the base, multiple diminutive suffixes contribute to “a greater degree of smallness (and affection) in comparison with the DIM1 [first-degree] nouns” (Manova and Winternitz 2011: 135). The intensification effect is applicable to interjections. Interjections with other diminutive suffixes, or multiple suffixes, based on *jej* include *jejku-ś*, *jej-ku-siu*, and even *jej-ecz-ku*, but they are extremely rare and demonstrate the emotional colouring of a text.

- (10) a. **Jejkuś**, aleś posta zapodał.

W takim razie życzę Ci, żebyś żył długo, zdrowo i szczęśliwie. [NKJP]

‘**Jejkuś**, you have a nice [timeline] status.

In that case I wish for you, that you live a long, healthy and happy life.’

- b. @username **jejeczku**, cóż, no więc musisz pogadać z mamą w 4 oczy i jej wytłumaczyć ile dla ciebie znaczą. [Twitter]

‘**jejeczku**, what, well then you have to talk with your mom with 4 eyes and explain to her how much they mean to you.’

- c. @username **jejkusiu** :(czemu mi to robisz 😞😞

‘**jejkusiu** :(why are you doing this to me 😞😞’

In (10a), *jejkuś* contributes to the tweeter’s positive evaluation of the other’s timeline status, and the diminutive elevates the positive and rather slangy tone of the message. In contrast, the Twitter example (10b) has two diminutive suffixes, which in this context conveys deeper feeling that suggests the tweeter’s emotional investment in helping her friend speak to her mother. Likewise,

⁸ During my research I communicated with several native speakers of Polish about the difference between the *-ku* and *-ciu* suffixes. Generally, the Poles thought that although the difference was very small, the *-ciu* suffix sounded more ‘tender’ and/or ‘softer’ than *-ku*. Specifically, one female (from Cieszyn, age cohort 50–59) wrote that “between *jejku* and *jejciu* I don’t feel a great difference. Maybe the *jejciu* is somehow more endearing/tender” (my translation). The ‘softer’ suffix sometimes was considered more ‘infantile’.

jejkusiu seems whiny or immature, particularly because of the unhappy face and crying emoticons.

The rarity of *jej* as an interjection makes it difficult to show the differences between *jejk* (and its diminutive variants) and *jej* in use. The large number of hits in the NKJP are almost always examples of *jej* the possessive pronoun. When used as an interjection, *jej* is often preceded by *o* (e.g. *o jej*) or occurs in the fixed sequence *jejk jej*. There are also other interjections that directly precede *jej*, such as *och* 'oh' (e.g. *och jej*), *ach* 'ah' (e.g. *ach jej*) or *no* 'well' (e.g. *no jej*). The preceding interjections amplify the emotion conveyed by the simplex *jej*. However, the elongated forms *jeej* and *jeejku* from Twitter show their relative similarity in (11).

- (11) a. **jeej!** co TY robisz że jesteś taka szczupła?!
 'jeej! what are YOU doing that you are so slim?!'
 b. **Jeejku!** Co sie dzieje z moim pieskiem? TAK SIĘ BOJĘ O NIEGO :(((
 'Jeejku! What is going on with my little dog? I'M SO SCARED FOR HIM :(((

The writer of (11a) is quite emphatic about why the other user is so slim; in fact, she not only uses *jeej* but also TY ('you') in capital letters and both an exclamation and question mark at the end. In contrast, example (11b) puts more words as capital letters, uses unhappy faces, *jeejku* and a diminutive for 'dog' in *pieskiem*. Although *jeej* and *jeejku* could be switched without affecting the underlying meaning, the *jeejku* suggests the speaker's exaggerated/attention-seeking use of *jeejku* that are grounded in her feelings and the situation.

Overall, these DIs show the potential variation by Polish speakers to add the pragmatic functions of compliments, advice and the meaning of 'unhappiness' by various diminutive suffixes to the underived interjection *jej*.⁹

5.4. Affection

5.4.1. Love and appreciation

Affection realized through love and appreciation is a core conceptual category for diminutives, and sometimes tweeters add a diminutive interjection into a conversation to show a sudden increase in feeling. For example, in (12), the same user uses *ojej* in nearly every tweet, except for a tweet where an *ojejku* is added for additional effect.

- (12) @username dobra, musze jeszcze coś kupić i będzie gotowe ale nie wiem jak zareagujesz, idk czy ci sie spodoba :(
 @username1 **ojej** co to jest? nie musisz na mnie kasy wydawac mis XD

⁹ Perhaps just as rare as the above are diminutive interjections from *joj* (a variant of *jej*), which form *jojku* (with 2 hits in NKJP), *ojojku* (1 hit), *ojojciu* (1 hit) and *jojciu* (no hits in NKJP, only on Twitter).

@username ale ja chce! to tam zostanie na zawsze i nikt tego nie zepsuje
 @username1 **ovej** ;D kurde teraz sie bede zastanawiac co to hahaha
 @username jak o tym myślę to serce zaczyna mi szybciej bić, aaaaa
 @username1 **ovej** no przestań serio? **ovejku** ale kochana jesteś
 @username no naprawdę, głupia jestem haha
 'good, I still have to buy something and it will be ready but I don't know how you'll react, idk if you'll like it :(
ovej what is it? you don't have to spend money on me honey XD
 but I want to! it will stay there forever and nobody will damage it
ovej ;D damn now I'm going to think about what it is hahaha
 when I think about it my heart begins to beat faster, aaaah
ovej well stop it really? **ovejku** but you're loved [or: **ovejku** but I really appreciate you]
 well really, I'm stupid haha'

The placement of the *ovejku* suggests that, if only in this conversation, the diminutive interjection comes from a deeper place emotionally than *ovej* – as an intensification of sorts – because it is only used once in the conversation, particularly at a moment of strong appreciation and affection. In comparison, the *ovej* mainly seems to maintain a level of emotion through surprise and delight. The *ovej* shows the tweeter's reactions, but only *ovejku* is used for additional emphasis.

5.4.2. Appreciation and gratitude

Feelings of gratitude, appreciation and affection that are indirectly expressed in (12) are often clearly conveyed through a *dziękuję* 'thank you' preceded by an *ovejku* or *jejku*. Although underived interjections also appear in these same immediate contexts of expressing gratitude, the diminutive interjections are just as frequently used on Twitter. Sometimes *jejciu* or *jejsiu* are used, but these are used to enhance endearment or 'littleness'. At other times, the tweeters add multiple emoticons (e.g. heart symbols and happy faces), as shown in (13):

- (13) a. @username **ovejku** 😊 też Cię kocham i mogę powiedzieć to samo o Tobie 💕
 Dziękuję za to, że jesteś
 'ovejku 😊 I also love you and can say the same about you 💕 Thank you, that you are'
 b. **ovejciu** bardzo dziękuję kochanie ❤️ to naprawdę miłe i urocze 😊💕
 'ovejciu thank you very much love ❤️ that is truly sweet and lovely 😊💕'

In (13a), the tweet is part of a conversation; here, the tweeter responds affectionately by the inclusion of emotion words such as *kocham* 'I love' and *dziękuję*. In (13b), the tweeter emphasizes her appreciation with *bardzo dziękuję* 'thank you very much,' the affectionate *kochanie* 'love,' and the adjectives *miłe* 'sweet' and *urocze* 'lovely.' Along with feelings for pets (below) and 'child' language with multiple diminutives, these diminutive interjections are frequently found in the most positive, affectionate and endearing contexts.

5.4.3. Feelings for pets and young animals

Diminutive interjections also serve to enhance affection in reference to pets and small animals. Although the derived interjections may be interchangeable with each other or with underived interjections, there is a slight difference in flavour, as is shown through the conversation between two teenagers in example (14). Here, *jejciu* is used twice by the same tweeter, while the second tweeter uses the non-DI *jeju* once and the diminutive *ovejku* once. More specifically, the first tweeter uses *jejciu* to amplify her strong affection towards cats that are described as *śłodkie* 'sweet'. The *jejciu* utilizes the sense of 'little' and shows the link between 'cute' things, specifically diminutive suffixes and small/young animals (e.g. kittens).

(14) @username ja tak samo i strasznie bym chciała mieć kotka? **jejciu** one są takie słodkie!

@username1 **jeju** ja mam kotke i rodzice sie zgodzili, aby jej nie sterylizowac(?) zeby miala male kotki 🍀 🍀 hhdhdhjsk

@username **jejciu** one są takie słodkie jak są małe!! sdkssh, ja mam piesa i on by pogryzł tego kota więc nie mogę mieć :(

@username1 piesy tez sa kjut 🍀

@username tak ale mój pies jest agresywny, gryzie ludzi ostatnio na mojego rocznego bratanka chciał się rzucić i wgl ew

@username1 **ovejku**:(Ja miałam agresywnego chomika i zmarł ze stresu przez kota 🍀 😊

'Td also and very much like to have a cat? **jejciu** they are so sweet!

jeju I have a cat and my parents agreed not to sterilize(?) it so that she'd have small kittens 🍀 🍀 hhdhdhjsk

jejciu they are so sweet when they're small!!! sdkssh, I have a dog and he would bite the cat so I can't have one :(

dogs are cute 🍀

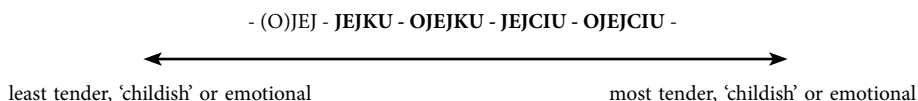
yes but my dog is aggressive, he bites people last time my year-old brother he wanted to throw and wgl ew

ovejku:(I had an aggressive hamster and it died from stress by the cat 🍀 😊

The place of *jeju* and *ovejku* in the conversation and the co-texts show how the choice of diminutive enhances attitude. Although both interjections are emotive, the non-diminutive *jeju* does not enhance, or convey, as much 'tender' or 'endearing' emotion as *jejciu* or *ovejku* (see example 3). That is, *jeju* is a comparatively simple response in the immediate context of admitting to having an unneutered cat. After finding out that her interlocutor's aggressive dog prevents her from getting a cat, the tweeter responds with *ovejku* and an unhappy face to convey pity and sadness, and subsequently attempts to lighten the situation through a joke about an aggressive hamster that died from the stress a cat put it through. This sudden directional switch in the conversation is reminiscent of example (12) above, where *ovejku* is a distinctive form that is used only once for special effect.

The Twitter conversation illustrates the distinction between diminutive interjections, and may be most effectively shown on the following continuum, from least to most tender (or ‘endearing’), ‘childish’ (or ‘little’) and emotional. It is a generalization, however, because idiolect and the fact the interjections are context-bound can add to or lessen the emotions conveyed by the diminutive interjection.

Figure 1. Emotional continuum of (diminutive) interjections



Thus, following Figure 1, *jeju* (or *ovej*) in place of *ovejku* would alter the tone of the message by placing it in a different place on the continuum, which would remove some of the tenderness, empathy and concern demonstrated by the tweeter and through the diminutive suffix; furthermore, it would also remove the ‘softening’ effect of the diminutive interjection.

5.5. Embarrassment

Diminutive interjections are not only used in positive or sympathetic contexts. Table 3 shows that *przepraszam* 'I'm sorry' frequently collocates with *ojeej*; however, it is also quite frequent for DIs. Consider the following:

- (15) a. Jejku, przepraszam, ale zapominam o tamtej skrzynce [NKJP]
'Jekju, I'm sorry, but I keep forgetting about that mailbox'
b. Jejku jej, przepraszam za ten niewybaczalny błąd [NKJP]
'Jekju jej, I'm sorry for that unforgivable mistake'

These examples demonstrate the speaker's regret and embarrassment, particularly about forgetting something (15a) and for some unspecified mistake (15b). Many of these DIs, particularly *jejku*, are followed by a negated verb (e.g. *jejku nie wiem* 'jejku I don't know', *jejku nie wiedziałam* 'jejku I didn't know'). Thus, in this function *jejku* is a reaction to perceived failings in understanding, seeing, knowing, etc. something that was brought up by an interlocutor. Compared with the functions of affection or sympathy, *jejku* comes across as more self-focused; it is a negative reaction of 'self' rather than a positive one about 'others' (e.g. kittens, victims).

6. Concluding remarks

The findings in this paper have shown the nuances and uses of two sets of diminutive interjections (DIs), specifically *jejku/jejciu* and *ojejku/ojejciu* in Polish. Data from the *National Corpus of Polish* (NKJP), bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, and the microblogging site Twitter were used to provide meanings, frequent collocations and immediate contexts for various uses of these DIs. The results from the dictionaries and corpora point to *ojejku* (and *ojejciu*) as a diminutive form that is used in several pragmatic senses (e.g. mainly to convey affection, sympathy and love), while the non-diminutive *ojej* is more of a general-purpose interjection which is emotionally and formally simplex (except for the *o* which often adds surprise), with the largest number of translation equivalents in English. The diminutive *jejku* follows closely with the number of potential English equivalents and is used so frequently in comparison to the other diminutive interjections that, in a similar way to diminutive nouns with the *-k-* diminutive affix, it may have become less marked emotively. Although the DIs and underived interjections can occur in similar immediate contexts and pragmatic senses, they often convey slightly different emotional nuances that are strongly linked to tenderness, endearment, and the concept of ‘child’.

Because of the frequency of the first-degree diminutive interjections with *-k-*, Poles have taken the diminution of interjections to the next level. I came across examples of *jejciu*, *jejeczku*, *ojejciu*, *ojejsiu* and even *ojojciu* and *jojku*. However, I was unable to find ‘standard’ DIs beyond the base interjection *jej/joj*. There may be other new or regional DIs, possibly including *auki* < *au* ‘ow’, or *czauki* < *czau* ‘hi/bye’. It is not surprising to hear Poles occasionally add suffixes to interjections on Twitter, particularly when talking to children, about or to animals, or speaking playfully. Sometimes the diminutive interjection can ‘soften’ or minimize the (possibly negative) effects of a situation and allow the speaker to connect with others and ‘minimize’ the situation as a coping device (e.g. in the Paris terrorist attacks, the death of a close relative). Perhaps paradoxically, the addition of the diminutive suffix may ‘amplify speech’ and make the DI seem more intense than its underived counterpart. A deeper sense of emotion is caused by the diminutive suffix, whereby its semantic and pragmatic senses allow speakers to convey slightly distinct (compared with underived interjections) attitude and response to various situations. Last, these examples from Twitter and the NKJP were used by teenagers and adults in ‘standard’ contexts (e.g. sympathy) or ‘childish’ contexts (e.g. with multiple diminutives), which shows the wide variation of functions and subjective attitudes towards diminutive interjections in Polish.

Finally, it seems imperative to mention some avenues for future research. In this paper I have omitted translating the interjections into English because the

topic of translating interjections is complicated by socio-cultural, formal, and other obstacles to identify translation 'equivalents'. However, a study of how these interjections are translated by many bilinguals between Polish and English (and, indeed, between Polish and other languages in general) could show the potentially similar meanings and functions between languages.

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